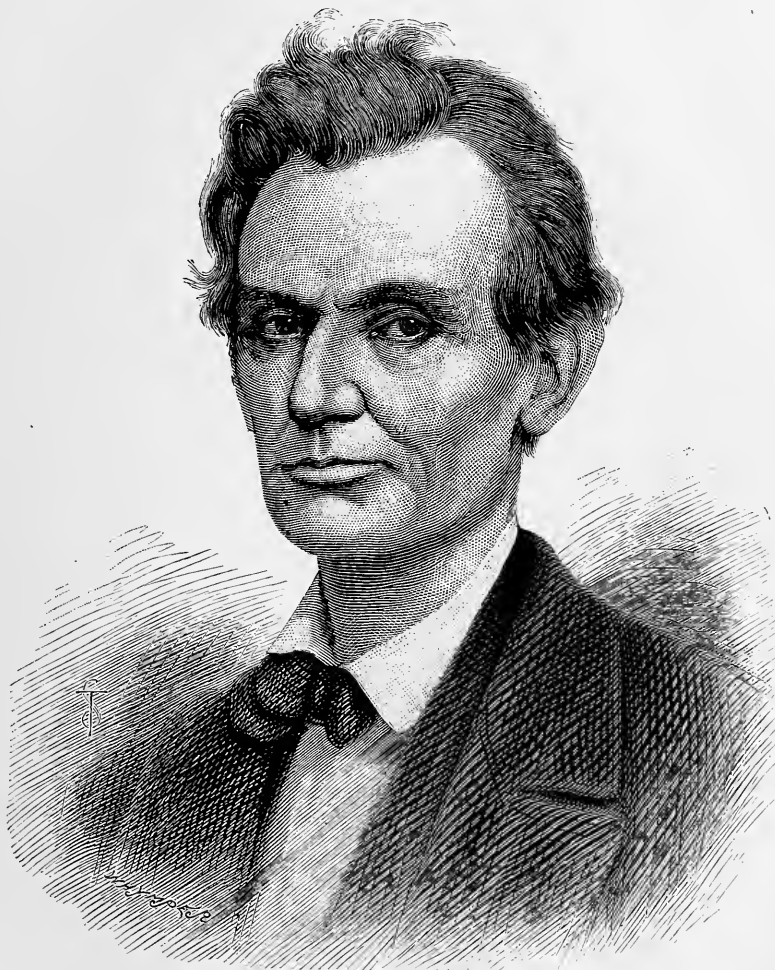


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ABRAHAM LINCOLN.



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ABRAHAM LINCOLN.



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I.

EARLY YEARS.

THE career of Abraham Lincoln affords a most striking illustration of the possibilities of life in the United States. Sprung from the humblest grade of society, by a wise and right use of the privileges and opportunities he shared with all his fellow-citizens, he attained the highest station in his country at the great crisis of her history. Playing as prominent a part in a vaster and more tragic struggle, he has received with Washington the patriot's undying fame.

Lincoln came of a good stock, although rank, wealth and learning were unrepresented among his immediate ancestors. It is not certain, but highly probable, that he was a descendant of the Samuel Lincoln who, about 1638, left Norwich in England for Hingham in what is now the State of Massachusetts. Thence the family moved to Virginia, and, in 1780, Abraham Lincoln, his grandfather, left Virginia for Kentucky, which was then being opened up by the famous pioneer, Daniel Boone. Kentucky, is one of the romance lands of the West, and the story of her settlement is full of deeds of heroism and endurance, but is also not wholly free from dark stains of treachery and cruelty. The fate of the pioneer Lincoln is an illustration of the price that had to be paid in human lives before the wilderness became habitable. Abraham Lincoln had cleared a small holding, and in 1786, while at work with his three sons extending the clearing, he was shot dead by an Indian concealed in the woods. The youngest son crouched by his father's body; the second made off to the nearest settlers for help; the eldest ran to the log-house, seized a rifle, and through a loop-hole shot his father's assailant as

he stood over the body of his victim. The youngest of the three sons, Thomas by name, married in 1806. A year later he moved to a small farm in Hardin County, Kentucky, and as Lincoln's biographers tell us, "settled down to a deeper poverty than any of his name had ever known; and there, in the midst of the most unpromising circumstances that ever witnessed the advent of a hero into this world, Abraham Lincoln was born on the 12th day of February, 1809."

In 1813, the family moved to a farm on Knob Creek, and in 1816 they again journeyed westward to Little Pigeon Creek in Indiana; and here, on October 5th, 1818, at the early age of thirty-five, Lincoln's mother died. Life in those newly settled regions was a hard struggle for the barest existence. Privations and the absence of the commonest advantages of childhood probably produced that melancholy which lay at the foundation of Lincoln's character; but they also matured in him a sturdy self-reliance and a fertility of resource to which in later days he owed much of his success.

His mother is described as handsome and—rare accomplishments in those parts at that date—as being able to read and write. She was probably too delicate to stand the rough wear and tear of frontier life, and hence died in her early prime. But she seems to have imparted much of her own gentleness to her boy, and one of his intimate friends in later life tells us that Lincoln said, "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother." She had taught him to read and write; she had implanted in him a love for truth and justice and for the Word of God which only deepened as the years of his life rolled on. One authentic incident of this period is very touching. According to the common custom, his

mother was buried hard by the homestead, and no religious service was held in connection with the funeral, as there was no minister of the Gospel within reach. But Lincoln, although only nine years old, could not bear the thought of his mother's funeral without any religious rites. And so he wrote off—and possibly this was the first letter he penned—to David Elkin, one of the frontier itinerant preachers, who, when the winter was over, came and held a religious service over the mother's grave.

In 1819, Lincoln's father married a second time. The step-mother's influence proved of the greatest benefit to the lad. She was an earnest Christian, a pattern of thrift and industry, and her influence over the household was wholly for good. She was fully alive to the value of education, and so far as it lay in her power, secured it for all her children. But in that wild region, and at that early date, education, in the modern sense of the term, hardly existed.

Lincoln himself has sketched for us this part of his life :—

"There were some schools so-called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond 'readin', 'writin', and cipherin' to the rule of three. If a straggler, supposed to understand Latin, happened to sojourn in the neighbourhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course, when I came of age, I did not know much. Still somehow I could read and write and cipher to the rule of three; but that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education I have picked up from time to time, under the pressure of necessity."

But Lincoln had acquired a love of study for its own sake, and hence he became his own best teacher. He read everything that came in his way; and fortunately the bulk of the literature within his reach was of the highest class. First and foremost was the Bible. From his earliest years, Lincoln was familiar with the best of books, and his most intimate friends are unanimous in the assertion that his knowledge of the Bible was altogether exceptional. *Æsop's Fables*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The*

Pilgrim's Progress, a *History of the United States*, and *Weam's Life of George Washington* were the remaining volumes of his library; and it may be questioned whether the world's literature, had it been at his disposal, could have provided other books better qualified to educate him for the great work of his life. These he read and re-read until they became a permanent part of his mental equipment. "But his voracity for anything printed," we are assured, "was insatiable. He would sit in the twilight and read a dictionary as long as he could see. He used to go to David Turnham's, the town constable, and devour the Revised Statutes of Indiana, as boys in our days do *The Three Guardsmen*. Of the books he did not own he took voluminous notes, filling his copy-book with choice extracts, and poring over them until they were fixed in his memory. He could not afford to waste paper upon his own original compositions."

As the years passed, he grew into a tall stalwart man, over six feet high. Many are the stories told illustrative of his kindness of heart, his strict sense of justice, and of his willingness to protect the weak. His step-mother's testimony is: "I can say what scarcely one mother in a thousand can say, Abe never gave me a cross word or look, and never refused in fact or appearance to do anything I asked him." He was always roused to a white heat of indignation by the sight of any cruelty to animals. He once saved the life of the town drunkard, whom he found freezing by the roadside, by carrying him a long distance, and watching over him until he regained consciousness.

In the rough work and the rough life of those days he could hold his own. "He could sink an axe deeper into wood than any man I ever saw," writes one friend. On one occasion, when some men were preparing an apparatus to move some heavy posts, Lincoln quickly shouldered them, and carried them where they were needed.

Thus early too his powers as a speaker

began to manifest themselves, for at harvest-time, to the disgust of their employer, the hands would forsake work to hear one of Lincoln's comic orations. In the rough-and-ready pugilistic encounters by which public opinion insisted upon differences being settled, as many incidents testify, he could much more than hold his own.

In 1830, Lincoln's father emigrated once more, and on this occasion went to Illinois, the great State with which the fortunes of Lincoln were to be inseparably associated.

II.

EARLY MANHOOD.

Lincoln now began to get out into the world on his own account. He made a trip in a flat-boat down the Mississippi to New Orleans in the spring of 1831. Three years before he had made the same voyage; but on this occasion a very powerful impression of the evil of slavery was made upon his mind. "At New Orleans," writes one of his fellow-voyagers, "we saw for the first time negroes chained, maltreated, whipped and scourged. Lincoln saw it; his heart bled; said nothing much, was silent, looked bad. I can say, knowing it, that it was on this trip that he formed his opinions of slavery." This was the first, but by no means the last, occasion on which Lincoln was compelled to witness the cruelties of the slave system. How wild would the prophecy have seemed, could it have been uttered on that May morning in 1831, that thirty-one years later, the lanky flat-boat hand would sign the famous proclamation that gave liberty to every slave in the United States!

During the next few years Lincoln was feeling after his life-work, and experimenting in many different directions. He assisted a man named Offnut in keeping a shop at the village of New Salem. While acting as Offnut's clerk, he began the study of English by walking twelve miles to purchase a Kirkham's Grammar. Already possessing the power of applying

himself vigorously to the work in hand, he soon mastered that treatise, now unknown to fame. In 1832 he served for a short time as a volunteer in a campaign against the Indians, called after a noted chief the "Black Hawk" war. Lincoln's popularity was proved by the fact that his comrades elected him captain. He himself has testified that no later success in receiving the suffrage of his fellows gave him such unalloyed pleasure. He took no part in the two battles that were fought; and he was mustered out of the service by a certain Lieutenant Anderson, who, twenty-nine years after, as Major in command at Fort Sumter, took part in the engagement which inaugurated the great civil war.

Meanwhile Lincoln had been aiming at a seat in the Legislature. Success in this would give him a footing upon the ladder of political and social promotion. The sterling nature of the man was conspicuous in the struggle. He espoused the cause of the unpopular party. The great problem before his constituency was whether the Sangamon River could be rendered navigable or not. Both parties were in favour of opening up this insignificant stream; but in the brief statements of opinion upon national questions by the unpopular Whigs, Lincoln believed he saw more truth and justice than in those of the popular Democrats, and so he threw in his lot with the former. His election address, crude as it is in some aspects, exhibits that balance of mind and readiness to hear the other side which in later years gave him his profound political insight, and enabled him to pen addresses which rank high amongst the best models. We quote only one paragraph: "Upon the subjects which I have treated, I have spoken as I have thought. I may be wrong in regards to any or all of them; but holding it a sound maxim that it is better only sometimes to be right than at all times wrong, so soon as I discover my opinions to be erroneous, I shall be ready to renounce them."

Lincoln was not successful in this first attempt to enter the Legislature. The question of what he should do in life became still more pressing, and in succession he filled the offices of shopkeeper, postmaster, and surveyor. In the first of these enterprises he was unfortunate. He had a worthless partner, who ultimately decamped, leaving Lincoln to face liabilities so large in amount that his friends facetiously described them as "the national debt." But scorning any of the easy and customary methods of escape, he paid to the uttermost penny debts for which the drunken partner was mainly responsible. In 1833, he became postmaster for New Salem, and held the appointment three years. His thirst for knowledge grew, and he eagerly seized all means of increasing his store. It was reported that he read every newspaper which the mails brought to New Salem. An incident which well exemplifies his scrupulous regard for other people's money occurred in this connection. The mail route was altered, and New Salem ceased to enjoy the dignity of being a postal centre. A balance of about £3 was in Lincoln's hands at the time. The official whose duty it was to collect this sum did not call upon Lincoln for it until some years had passed. When he did so, Lincoln was still very poor and hard pushed for the bare necessities of life; but he at once went to a trunk, took out a little bundle, and handed it to the agent. It was the exact sum, made up of the silver and copper coins which had been paid in at the post-office years before. "I never use any man's money but my own," he remarked as he handed it over.

His influence had now begun to extend beyond his own immediate neighbourhood; and in 1834 he was elected to the State Legislature. This event brought to a close the first and hardest period of his early life, and laid the foundation of his later popularity. He had passed unscathed through the dangers and difficulties and temptations of the wild, rough, and yet vigorous fron-

tier life; and although unaware of it yet himself, had surmounted the greatest obstacles in his path. He was the best educated man, in many respects, of all that region, and already he was widely known as "Honest Abe Lincoln." And in the Western State no less than in the polished centres of civilization, character and ability were certain in the long run to enable their possessor to rise to a foremost position among his fellows.

It was at this time also that the romance of his life occurred. He fell in love with a beautiful girl named Anne Rutledge, who returned his affection, and to whom he was to have been married; but in 1835, before he had completed his legal studies, she died. With Anne Rutledge's memory he seems always afterwards to have associated the verses he was so fond of repeating in his sadder moments, and which have come, though without sufficient evidence, to be considered as his favourite poem—

"Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave."

Lincoln's residence at Vandalia, then the capital of Illinois, during the sessions of the Legislature, brought him into contact with the ablest men of the State, and afforded him many opportunities for carrying on his education. The only incident in this first term of public service worthy of note happened just as it was drawing to a close. The Legislature, faithfully reflecting the views of the majority at that time, had passed resolutions in favour of slavery. Lincoln drew up the following protest, which was formally entered upon the journals of the House—

"Resolutions upon the subject of domestic slavery having passed both branches of the General Assembly at its present session, the undersigned hereby protest against the passage of the same. They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of Abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils."

A very mild protest this, judged by after events and in the light of the present day. But it was thought a bold deed at the time of its occurrence, and it stands out as a great landmark in Lincoln's career. It was the beginning of his life-work; it was the foundation stone of that great building completed by the immortal Emancipation Proclamation.

III.

LIFE IN SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.

The Legislature in this session also decreed that Springfield should become the State capital, and in 1837 Lincoln removed to that town, of which until his death he remained a citizen. At this time the town numbered only 1500 inhabitants. It was "built on the edge of the woods, the north side touching the timber, the south encroaching on the prairie. The richness of the soil was seen in the mud of the streets, black as ink, and of unfathomable depths in time of thaw. There were no pavements or sidewalks. The houses were almost all of wood, and were disposed in rectangular blocks." Here he entered into partnership with a friend named John T. Stuart, and began the study and the practice of law, a proceeding which in those days required little or no special training. From 1836 to 1842 he was re-elected. In 1840 he first came into public collision with his great adversary, Douglas, but only upon a matter of purely local politics. A friend named Milton Hay, who studied law with Lincoln at this time, has left on record a very graphic sketch of the conditions of life and legal practice in Springfield fifty years ago:—

"Population was sparse, and society scarcely organized; land was plentiful and employment abundant. There was an utter absence of the abstruse questions and complications which now beset the law. The character of this simple litigation drew the lawyer into the street and neighbourhood, and into close and active intercourse with all classes of men. If a man had an uncollectible debt, the current phrase was, 'I'll take it out of his hide. This would bring an action for assault and battery. The free comments of

the neighbours on the fracas or the character of the parties would be productive of slander suits. A man would for his convenience lay down an irascible neighbour's fence, and indolently forget to put it up again, and thus prepare the way for an action of trespass; the suit would lead to a free fight, and sometimes furnish the bloody incidents of a murder trial."

About 1840, Lincoln began to manifest an eager interest in the political life of the nation, and it was in this rough Western school that he acquired the ready wit, the apt speech, the knowledge of men and things, which stood him in such good stead during the last ten years of his life.

In 1842, he married Miss Mary Todd, of Lexington, Kentucky. This period was one of mental and spiritual growth. His constitutional melancholy, intensified by the conditions of frontier life, his want of reliance upon his own powers, his exalted reverence for woman, combined to make the time of courtship a season of mental conflict, from which he emerged strong, capable and equipped for the great work of his life. His biographers assert that "the late but splendid maturity of Lincoln's mind and character dates from this time, and although he grew in strength and knowledge to the end, from this year we observe a steadiness and sobriety of thought and purpose, as discernible in his life as in his style. He was like a blade forged in fire and tempered in the ice-brook, ready for battle whenever the battle might come."

In 1846, Lincoln was nominated as candidate for Congress. His opponent was the famous Peter Cartwright, the typical backwoods preacher, and one of the most remarkable men of this century. But his undoubted popularity afforded him little help in the struggle with Lincoln, who was returned as Member of Congress by a very large majority.

In his second session he introduced a bill for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, the only portion of the United States under the absolute control of the Federal Government. It aroused violent opposition; it had no

chance of passing, and is interesting only as an index to his mind and political aims at this time. He was not a candidate for re-election, and this brief spell of two years was all the experience of Congress he was to enjoy.

From 1849 to 1854, Lincoln pursued his work as a Springfield lawyer. He threw himself with renewed energy into his old pursuits. He had been brought into contact with other men and other currents of thought in the national capital, and it is very characteristic of the man to note how he realized some new defects in himself, and how he set about removing them with his accustomed vigour and application. To strengthen his power of close and sustained reasoning, he gave himself to the study of logic and mathematics, mastering, among other things, once and for all, the first six books of Euclid. During these years, he was the acknowledged head of the Circuit in which he practised. A colleague, who afterwards became a judge, says of him:—

“In all the elements that constitute the great lawyer, he had few equals. He seized the strong parts of a cause, and presented them with great clearness and compactness. The framework of his mental and moral being was honesty, and a wrong cause was poorly defended by him. The ability which some lawyers possess of explaining away the bad points of a cause by ingenious sophistry was denied him. In order to bring into full activity his great powers, it was necessary that he should be convinced of the right and justice of the matter which he advocated. When so convinced, whether the cause were great or small, he was usually successful. He hated wrong and oppression everywhere. He was the most simple and unostentatious of men in his habits, having few wants and those easily supplied. To his honour be it said, that he never took from a client, even when his cause was gained, more than he thought the services were worth, or the client could reasonably afford to pay. The people where he practised law were not rich, and his charges were always small.”

Another friend records that upon one occasion he said to a man who tried unsuccessfully to enlist him in what to Lincoln seemed an unjust case, “Yes, there is no reasonable doubt but that I can gain your case for you. I can set

a whole neighbourhood at loggerheads; I can distress a widowed mother and her six fatherless children, and thereby get for you \$600 which rightfully belong, it appears to me, as much to them as to you. I shall not take your case, but I will give you a little advice for nothing. You seem a sprightly, energetic man. I advise you to try your hand at making \$600 some other way.”

IV.

LINCOLN AS AN OPPONENT OF SLAVERY EXTENSION.

The Secession movement of 1861, culminating in the formation of the Confederate States and the great civil war, was due to powerful influences acting over more than one generation; and no person in any full measure acquainted with the facts can fail to see that slavery was the one efficient cause of the war. The battle raged in public life, in Congressional and Presidential Elections, fifteen years before the fateful guns opened fire upon Fort Sumter. In fact their opening fire was but the sign that the “irrepressible conflict,” as Seward termed it, had been transferred from the senate to the camp. It was during these fifteen years that Lincoln won the heart of the great West, established his reputation as the ablest speaker and one of the most far-seeing men of his time, and by a development in which there was nothing accidental, came to be recognised as the one man to whom in the most critical moment of American history the new, vigorous and resolute anti-slavery party could entrust almost absolute power.

From the very foundation of the Republic, slavery had been a weakness and a source of division. More by accident than design it had happened that when Illinois, in 1818, was admitted into the Union as a *free State*, the number in which slavery was legal, and in which it was excluded, was exactly equal, viz. eleven. Then began the struggle for “the balance of power.” In 1820, the oft-mentioned Missouri Compromise was

arrived at. By this arrangement Maine was admitted as a free State, Missouri as a slave State, and the line north of which slavery was not to exist was fixed at north latitude $36^{\circ} 30'$. Thenceforward the balance was maintained. In 1836, Michigan free, and Arkansas slave, were admitted; in 1845, Iowa free, and Florida slave. But with the admission of the latter, although the admission of Texas in December 1845 gave them an actual majority for a brief time, the politicians of the South saw that their territory was exhausted while enormous areas yet remained to the North, pointing inevitably to the fact that in a few years the balance must go away from the South and from slavery for ever. The South, by a skilfully conducted and persistent policy, threw the whole country into a political convulsion, resulting, in 1854, in the repeal of the Compromise of 1820, due largely to the fact that while the South went solid for it, the North was greatly divided in opinion.

Repeal, successful in Congress, determined to push its influence in the country, and from 1854 a state of affairs that was but little short of civil war raged in Kansas. The South resolved that Kansas should elect for slavery. The settlers, aided by the magnetism and force of the famous John Brown, determined that the soil of Kansas should be free. Thrilling is the story and powerful was its influence, but we cannot stay even to sketch it in outline. It served nevertheless the great purpose of giving to the Northern States a magnificent object lesson on the results of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise.

Prior to 1856, the political parties had ranged under the names of Democrats (Repealers) and Whigs, to which Lincoln belonged. But it was a time when the old order was breaking up and new combinations were in the process of formation. The most powerful of the latter was the gradual organisation of a great party opposed absolutely to the *extension* of slavery and known by the name Re-

publican. The Illinois section, of which Lincoln was the trusted leader, took definite shape in 1856. The Republican Convention that year nominated John C. Fremont for President, but the organization had not yet acquired sufficient solidarity to become a great power in the State, and Buchanan, the last of the old Democratic Presidents, was elected.

In 1858, Stephen A. Douglas had to seek re-election as senator for Illinois. Lincoln was at once and unanimously nominated as his Republican opponent, and in one of the most carefully prepared speeches of his life, accepting the nomination, Lincoln uttered the following remarkable and prophetic words:—

“We are now in the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. ‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I don’t expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.”

The canvas soon resolved itself into the greatest political conflict of that generation. Douglas was a speaker of consummate ability, of great reputation and experience, and a prominent candidate for the next Presidency. But Lincoln saw deeper into the true bearing of things, and had a clearer vision for the signs of the times. They agreed to debate the burning questions of the hour together. Lincoln took his stand upon what he held to be the true interpretation of the Declaration of Independence, viz. that it was inconsistent with the existence of slavery; and he sought to arouse the national conscience to what he considered the plain moral duty of the time—

strenuous and unceasing resistance to pro-slavery extension.

In his speeches Lincoln gave utterance to some of his ripest wisdom and most famous maxims. Here are a few examples:—

“No man is good enough to govern another man without that other’s consent.”

“The master not only governs the slave without his consent, but he governs him by a set of rules altogether different from those which he prescribes for himself. Allow all the governed an equal voice in the government, that and that only is self-government.”

“Slavery is founded in the selfishness of men’s nature—opposition to it in his love of justice. These principles are in eternal antagonism; and when brought into collision so fiercely as slavery extension brings them, shocks and throes and convulsions must ceaselessly follow. Repeal the Missouri Compromise—repeal the Declaration of Independence—repeal all past history—still you cannot repeal human nature.”

The campaign was long and arduous, and the voting power very equal. But Lincoln was beaten by the defection of the Whig remnant. They would not throw in their lot with the new and forward party, and though numerically insignificant they turned the scale. On the election day, the numbers were—Lincoln 125,430 Republican votes; Douglas 121,609 Democrat votes *plus* 5071 Whig votes. Lincoln, like other men, smarted under defeat, but he had the consolation of knowing that he had given a powerful impulse to reform, he had made the Presidency impossible for Douglas in 1860, and he himself tells us, “I am glad I made the late race. It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age which I could have had in no other way; and though I now sink out of view, and shall be forgotten, I believe I have made some marks which will tell for the cause of liberty long after I am gone.”

He had done his best, and though apparently defeated, had won the great victory of his life. Little as he dreamed it then, it was his able, high-principled, and elevated conduct of this keen personal conflict that enabled the new and growing Republican party of the

West and North-west to recognise in him their true leader, and slowly but irresistibly to resolve that to his hands, so far as they could secure it, the destinies of the country should be entrusted. In a less degree the struggle had fixed upon him the attention of the Middle and Eastern States, and he addressed large gatherings in New York and in some of the New England States. The impression current in Europe in 1860 that he was an unknown man was as erroneous as many popular ideas which then obtained with regard to men and movements in the United States. In Washington and New York, Seward was a much greater power; but when it came to the real issue in the nomination convention, the Western man easily vanquished the Eastern.

Lincoln was ultimately elected as Buchanan’s successor, and the pro-slavery party at once recognising this as a death-blow to their “balance of power” and slavery extension views, prepared to combat it by a revolutionary, disguised as a “State right,” movement. They resolved that the Federal government not only had no right to interfere with State domestic institutions, such as negro servitude, but also had no right to maintain the Federal Union whenever any one or any group of States wished to withdraw. This somewhat delicate question soon passed from the Senate to the battle-field, and was ultimately settled by the arbitrament of war.

V.

LINCOLN’S INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT.

Four months elapse between the election of a President of the United States and his entrance upon office. These four months were turned to good use by the Southern party. The majority of Buchanan’s Cabinet were Secessionists, who devoted their remaining period of office to disabling in every possible way the Government they had sworn to maintain. Without any vigorous effort to check them on Buchanan’s part, seven South-

ern States seceded ; and on February 4th, 1861, at Montgomery in Alabama, their delegates met to form a Southern Confederacy. On February 8th, a provisional government for the Confederate States of America was adopted, and by March 11th, a constitution based upon negro slavery and State rights was elaborated. Meanwhile, Jefferson Davis had been elected and inaugurated President of the Confederate States, amid wild rejoicings and confident assertions that the old Union was severed for ever.

Meanwhile, Lincoln, waiting quietly at home in Springfield, looked forward to the fearful conflict which he so clearly foresaw, and in which he knew, if life were spared, he was destined to take the foremost place. On February 11th, 1861, he left Springfield, and began his progress towards Washington. At the railway station, when about to enter the carriage, amidst a crowd of old familiar friends and neighbours, he uttered a few heartfelt words of farewell which enable us to understand the spirit in which he entered upon the greatest task undertaken by any man of the nineteenth century :—

“My friends, no one not in my position can realise the sadness I feel at this parting. To this people I owe all that I am. Here I have lived more than a quarter of a century. Here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried. I know not how soon I shall see you again. I go to assume a task more difficult than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He never would have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine blessing which sustained him ; and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support. And I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that Divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain. Again I bid you an affectionate farewell.”

His progress through the different cities of the West aroused great enthusiasm. But it is significant of the fierce passions then raging that a conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln as he passed through Baltimore was dis-

covered, and the President came on secretly to the capital. On March 4th, he was duly inaugurated. It is the custom for the President of the United States to deliver his inaugural address standing on the magnificent eastern front of the Capitol, facing the statue of Washington. Public interest centred in what Lincoln would say and do. Everything that malice and slander could do, had been done to arouse prejudice against him. By many he was supposed to be a frontier savage, more at home in a lumber camp than in a senate chamber, and who had been raised to a dignity, which he could not possibly adorn, not by any native worth or ability, but simply by unscrupulous party politics. What those who knew him saw was a tall kindly man, full of profound thoughts on State policy, and of earnest longing for his country's weal in a time of extreme danger. What his hearers heard was the first of those great utterances on public affairs which have placed Lincoln in the front rank of the world's statesmen.

He was surrounded by a group of remarkable men. There was Buchanan, the outgoing President, during whose term of office the ship of State had drifted perilously near the breakers ; there was Chief Justice Taney, who had just administered the oath of allegiance, the author of the famous Dred-Scott decision¹ and the author of a policy upon the slave question which Lincoln abhorred ; there was the scholarly and thoughtful Sumner, the senator who had laboured long and suffered much in the cause which was now about to triumph ; and there also stood Douglas, the early friend and strenuous opponent of Lincoln, himself a defeated candidate for the Presidency, but now determined to stand by the old Union to the last. Before them were gathered thousands of their fellow-countrymen, to whom and

¹ By this decision all officials and inhabitants of the Free States were compelled, as far as it lay in their power, to aid in the return of fugitive slaves to their masters.

through whom to the whole land, Lincoln spoke.

He maintained two propositions, viz., that the Union of the States must be perpetual, and that the laws of the Union must be faithfully executed in all the States. He pleaded for quiet thought upon the issues then before the nation, and he closed with a solemn appeal to both North and South, based upon the self-sacrifice of their fathers in the struggle for independence:—

“I am loath to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearth-stone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

VI.

THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SLAVES.

On April 11th, 1861, the great Civil War was begun by the South. Fort Sumter was bombarded and evacuated. But the Southern leaders had done far more than they desired. Their wish was to shatter Lincoln's administration on the very threshold of existence; what they did was to still faction at the North, and to arouse an enthusiasm for the Union which never fully spent its force until the Confederacy was in ruins, every slave set free, and the men who scoffed at Abraham Lincoln in 1861, had become in 1865 fugitives from the power they had schemed to overthrow.

We can but glance at the main episodes of that terrible struggle in which Lincoln's personality and eloquence were all-powerful. The current opinion in many quarters at the time was that Lincoln's ideas and actions were largely controlled by Seward. But there is now no doubt that all through the tangled maze of political and military strife, it was Lincoln's clear brain and

resolute will, and unselfish devotion to his country, that led the nation along the path of justice and self-sacrifice to the haven of peace.

The turning-point in the struggle was the emancipation of the slaves, and with this great deed Lincoln's name is for ever associated. In the execution of it he exhibited to the full his great qualities. He was in the best sense of the term a practical statesman. Yielding to none in his hatred of slavery, and in his perception of the horrible iniquity and injustice of the system, he yet refused to be hurried into premature action. The strongest pressure was brought to bear upon him to declare for it in the first months of the war, but he steadily refused. He did take action at the moment when the proclamation could deal a most deadly blow to the Confederacy, and so become a powerful agent in securing its own fulfilment. The President of the United States is accessible to visitors and deputations in a way altogether unknown to European rulers, and during 1862 many and varied were the visitors who came to urge their views of his duty upon him. But just as in his Cabinet, he acted solely upon his own judgment, and had made the fateful decision before he consulted the ministers, so although willing to hear all that could be said, he reserved the right of final judgment. He listened patiently to a Quaker lady, who in a long harangue assured him that he had been appointed by the Lord to abolish slavery at once. When her eloquence was exhausted, he remarked, “I have neither time nor disposition to enter into discussion with the Friend, and end this occasion by suggesting for her consideration the question whether, if it be true that the Lord has appointed me to do the work she has indicated, is it not probable that He would have communicated the fact to me as well as to her?” About the same time, an influential deputation of ministers from Chicago visited the White House on a similar errand. Lincoln put to them the problem that

had been troubling him for months. "If I cannot enforce the constitution down South, how am I to enforce a mere presidential proclamation? Won't the world sneer at it as being as powerless as the Pope's bull against the comet?" One member of the deputation, just as they were retiring, burst out, "What you have said to us, Mr. President, compels me to say in reply, that it is a message to you from our Divine Master, through me, commanding you, sir, to open the doors of bondage that the slave may go free!" Lincoln instantly rejoined, "That may be, sir, for I have studied this question by night and by day, for weeks and for months, but if it is, as you say, a message from your Divine Master, is it not odd that the only channel He could send it by was that roundabout route, by that awfully wicked city of Chicago?"

And yet at this time his mind was fully made up, and in a few weeks the proclamation was issued. The year 1862 had been a season of fearful trial and responsibility to the Administration. The capture of Fort Donelson in the West, and of New Orleans in the far South, had been serious blows to the Confederacy. But the repulse of General McClellan from before Richmond, and the sanguinary defeat at Fredericksburg under General Burnside, had rendered rebellion bold, and had enormously increased Lincoln's difficulties. Loyal to McClellan, Lincoln determined to give him one more chance. He was reinstated in command of the army of the Potomac, from which he had been relieved for a time. The great battle of Antietam was fought in September. Lee was repulsed, his invasion of the North had failed, his army was in retreat, and Lincoln seized the opportune moment. On September 22, 1862, he issued the great proclamation, declaring that on January 1, 1863, the slaves in all the States, or parts of States, in rebellion against the United States Government, would be declared free men. On January 1, 1863, he signed

the final proclamation. He had been shaking hands for hours at the customary New Year's reception. When the Secretary of State brought in the document,—second in American history in importance only to the Declaration of Independence—he said, "My right hand is almost paralyzed. If my name ever gets into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it. If my hand trembles when I sign the proclamation, those who examine the document hereafter will say, 'He hesitated.'" He rested his arm on the table, and then taking up the pen, wrote his name as firmly and legibly as he had ever signed it in his life.

Great was the rejoicing in the loyal States. It was felt instinctively that God's great purpose was now fulfilled—that the sacrifices of blood and treasure were not in vain, that final victory was secure, and that at last the nation was free from the guilt of an awful crime.

The immediate result upon the war was not encouraging. Both in the South and in Europe the proclamation was scoffed at. McClellan, having been finally dismissed from the command of the army of the Potomac, Hooker became Commander-in-chief, only to suffer defeat at Chancellorsville. For a time all Grant's efforts to capture Vicksburg were fruitless. Lee was encouraged to assume once again the offensive, and invaded the North. The very crisis of the war came, and by a curious coincidence, on July 4, 1863, it was known all over the land that Vicksburg had surrendered, and that Lee had been defeated at Gettysburg. From this time onwards the fortune of war went steadily against the South, and the Confederates could only retard but not avert the complete defeat of their schemes.

VII.

THE GETTYSBURG SPEECH AND THE SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

Part of the battlefield at Gettysburg was occupied by a cemetery. The

Government purchased the adjoining land as a national burying ground for the thousands of soldiers who fell in that murderous struggle. On November 19, 1863, it was consecrated to this sacred purpose. The President, the Cabinet, public men, foreign ministers, officers, soldiers, and citizens, gathered in great numbers. Edward Everett, a famous orator, delivered a speech of great ability. But Lincoln uttered the true words of consecration—in words which came straight from his heart, and which went straight to the hearts of all who heard them. As soon as Everett had finished, Lincoln rose, and in complete self-forgetfulness, under the full spell of the hour and of the associations of the place, standing on the spot where thousands of the best men in the nation had died to maintain its liberty, he spoke as follows:—

“Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We are met to dedicate a portion of it as the final resting-place of those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

“But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we *say* here, but it can never forget what they *did* here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work that they have thus far so nobly carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion, that we here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Although Gettysburg was the turning-point of the conflict, and the prospect of the Confederate States from that time on-

wards was hopeless, they continued the struggle for nearly two years. Towards the close of 1863 it became evident to all that Grant and Sherman were the two master-minds among the generals of the North. Hence, early in 1864, Grant became Commander-in-Chief, and devoted himself to the task of crushing Lee, while Sherman dismembered the Confederacy by the capture of Atlanta, and the march through Georgia. But to Lincoln himself the year 1864 brought no respite. The season for another presidential election had arrived. Among the peace-at-any-price section of the North there was great dissatisfaction. For the great bulk of the nation there was but one possible candidate. They determined to act upon Lincoln's caution about the folly of swapping horses while crossing a stream, and nominated him. Moreover he was coming very close to the heart of the nation. All men of discernment were beginning to realize something of his greatness, his self-sacrifice, his unwearied patience, his noble and devoted patriotism, and bearing down all opposition the Republican party nominated him as their candidate for a second term. His opponents played into his hands by selecting as their candidate the most conspicuous failure of the war, General McClellan. When the voting day came Lincoln was re-elected by an enormous majority.

On March 4th, 1865, he stood for the second time upon the steps of the Capitol addressing his fellow-citizens, only this time in the crowd stood long lines of invalid and wounded soldiers who had taken part in the war that had raged for nearly four years. Behind Lincoln were four such years as few men have ever passed. In 1861 the future was dark and uncertain; in 1865 the clouds were still heavy, but he could see the light beyond; peace was near at hand. Looking on with a steady gaze to the responsibilities towards the Southern States which he expected to assume in a few weeks, Lincoln uttered his second inaugural, a speech worthy in all respects to rank with the

Gettysburg address. After a brief exordium he continued :—

“On the occasion corresponding to this, four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avoid it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city, seeking to destroy it with war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide the effects of negotiations. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish; and the war came. One-eighth of the whole population were coloured slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localised in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

“Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph and a result less fundamental and astounding.

“Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces. But let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayer of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. ‘Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.’ If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of these offences which in the providence of God must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern there any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that the mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said,

that ‘the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’

“With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

VIII.

CLOSING DAYS.

It was in this spirit, “with malice towards none, with charity towards all,” that Lincoln looked forward to the task of reconstruction. On the 4th of April, one calendar month after his inauguration, Lincoln entered Richmond, and was hailed as their deliverer by thousands of liberated slaves. On the 9th of April, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomatox, and the Civil War came to a close. The South had played a desperate game, and in their ruin accomplished the final and complete emancipation of the slave. The hearts of all men in the North were full of joy and gladness. Lincoln himself was “like a boy out of school.” On the 14th of April, after hearing from his son, who was present, the details of Lee’s surrender, and receiving the congratulations of friends, he attended at noon a meeting of the Cabinet. In the afternoon he went for a drive with his wife, with whom he cheerfully sketched out plans for the future—how when his term was over they would return to the old home and the old life. It had been announced that he and General Grant would be present in the evening at Ford’s theatre. He was unwilling to go, but Grant was prevented by an engagement, and Lincoln was unwilling to disappoint the people. At 10.30 a man named John Wilkes Booth, an actor and a member of a band of conspirators who had plotted to murder Lincoln, Grant, Seward, and other public men, entered the box, shot the President in the back of the head, and made his escape across

the stage. The assassin was shot dead on April 21st by one of the soldiers pursuing him.

Lincoln became instantly unconscious, was carried to a neighbouring house, and died about seven o'clock the next morning. His death plunged the whole land into the deepest gloom, and changed the glad rejoicings at the return of peace into lamentations for the simple kindly-hearted man who had done so much to win the victory, and who had now crowned the nation's sacrifice by the loss of his own life. After ceremonies imposing from their very simplicity at Washington, the mortal remains of the beloved President were taken by way of Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, and Chicago, to Springfield, where he was laid to rest "among his own people."

IX.

SOME OF LINCOLN'S CHARACTERISTICS.

Lincoln exhibited in a very high degree one of the chief marks of greatness, steady growth. He developed as the years passed in mental and spiritual force, and in his power to charm and influence other men. Large of stature, strong in physique, emotional, at one time bubbling over with humour, at another, the prey to a profound melancholy, he was often a puzzle to all but keen and sympathetic natures.

His fondness for humorous writings and his readiness to quote them were often misunderstood. It was supposed that he gave his time to committing the passages he quoted to memory. To one who expressed this feeling he replied, "Oh! if I like a thing it just sticks after once reading it or hearing it." After reciting a long series of verses to an intimate friend, he exclaimed: "I don't believe I have thought of that for forty years." His fondness for telling good stories is well known. He was equally ready to hear them. He once convulsed a great reception at the White

House by arresting in the flow of presentations a man of high standing, into whose ear he whispered a question, and then listened for five minutes while the guest replied. It was not a State secret, but the point of a good story which he had heard and forgotten, which Lincoln was bent on recovering. Apocryphal stories abound, but the authentic list is also very long. The friend of an officer related to a general once told Lincoln that he was aggrieved because he thought his relationship kept him down. Lincoln burst into a laugh, and said, "Why, it is the only thing that keeps him up." On hearing of the death and funeral ceremonies of an old and inordinately vain general who had fought in the Mexican war, Lincoln exclaimed, "If he had known how big a funeral he would have had he would have died years ago." To a deputation of millionaires who waited on him to demand protection, and who emphasized the fact of their great wealth, he rejoined, "Gentlemen, if I were worth half as much as you are represented to be, and as badly frightened as you seem to be, I would build a gun-boat and give it to the Government."

While Lincoln, in his speeches and state papers, touched the highest level of eloquence, he was also a great master of phrases. How aptly he set forth one great result of the capture of Vicksburg by the phrase, "The Father of Waters now goes unvexed to the sea," and acknowledged the services of the navy in the words, "Nor must Uncle Sam's web-feet be forgotten." He refused to satisfy literary critics who wished him to expunge the phrase "Sugar-coated pills" from a great state paper on the ground that the time would never come when the American people would fail to know what it meant. In one of the famous Douglas speeches, he represented his opponents as engaged "in blowing out the moral lights around us." When riding through a wood in Virginia, he saw a tree upon which had grown and entwined a most luxuriant vine. "Yes," he remarked, "that is very beautiful;

but that vine is like certain habits of men: it decorates the ruin that it makes." A friend met a choleric member of the opposite party striding away from one of Lincoln's early Illinois speeches. He was striking the earth with his cane, and exclaiming as he walked, "He's a dangerous man, sir! a dangerous man! He makes you believe what he says in spite of yourself!"

Lincoln's nature was deeply religious. From boyhood he had been familiar with the Bible, and as the years passed his belief and trust in God's overruling and active Providence in the affairs of men and nations ever deepened. But for this he could hardly have endured the strain of life which, during the Civil War, became almost too severe even for his iron frame and resolute will. He said one day to a friend, "I feel as though I shall never be glad any more." At the Cabinet Meeting on the day of his assassination he told them that he had dreamed in the night a dream which he had had twice before, both times on the eve of a great disaster to the national forces. He was alone, and in an open boat on a great river, drifting, drifting. That evening he was shot. And yet he was not a man given to morbid fancies. Officers and intimate friends at Washington occasionally remonstrated with him for not taking what they considered adequate precautions for his safety in his walks and drives.

Again and again in his speeches and papers evidences of his trust in God appear. In 1864 the negroes of Baltimore presented him with a Bible. He said on that occasion, "In regard to the Great Book I have only to say that it is the best gift which God has given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated through this Book." He had his full share of the sorrows and trials of life, and they exercised upon him a chastening influence.

Dr. Gurley, the pastor of the church he attended regularly in Washington, said to an intimate friend:—

"I had frequent and intimate conversations with him on the subject of the Bible and the Christian religion, when he could have had no motive to deceive me, and I considered him sound not only in the truth of the Christian religion, but in all its fundamental doctrines and teachings. And more than that: in the latter days of his chastened and weary life, after the death of his son Willie and his visit to the battle-field of Gettysburg, he said, with tears in his eyes, that he had lost confidence in everything but God, and that he now believed his heart was changed, and that he loved the Saviour, and if he was not deceived in himself it was his intention soon to make a profession of religion."

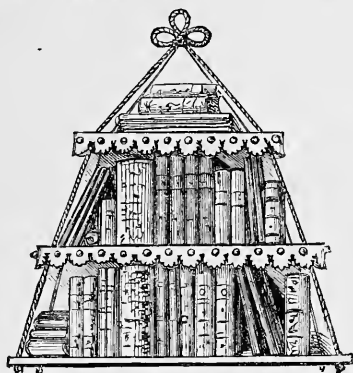
The same minister in a funeral sermon expressed the following views:—

"Probably since the days of Washington, no man was ever so deeply and firmly embedded and enshrined in the hearts of the people as Abraham Lincoln. Nor was it a mistaken confidence and love. He deserved it—deserved it all. He merited it by his character, by his acts, and by the whole tenor of his life. His integrity was thorough, all-pervading, all-controlling, and incorruptible. He saw his duty as chief magistrate of a great and imperilled people, and he determined to do his duty, seeking the guidance and leaning on the Arm of Him of whom it is written, 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.'"

There is much evidence for the view held by many competent judges, viz., that in Abraham Lincoln the typical character of the United States has approached most nearly to the ideal. Slowly but surely the people of his own land, and of the whole civilized world, are recognising the truth of Russell Lowell's beautiful lines—

"Great captains with their guns and drums
Disturb our judgment for the hour;
But at last silence comes:
These all are gone, and, standing like a
tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, far-seeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American."

RICHARD LOVETT, M.A.



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